

Rewald Defense Team Cleared of Contempt

But Prosecutors Explore New Charges

By Charles Memminger
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Contempt of court charges were dropped against Ronald Rewald's attorneys yesterday but prosecutors are exploring the possibility of raising new charges.

Visiting U.S. Judge Marilyn Patel dismissed three charges against Federal Public Defender Michael Levine and his deputy, Brian Tamanaha, and the government dropped a fourth charge against Tamanaha.

The defense attorneys were charged with violating a protective order by U.S. Judge Harold Fong during the lengthy trial in which Rewald was convicted of bilking investors out of millions of dollars.

The order related to the handling of classified material by the attorneys during the trial. They also were charged with violating an order by Fong that they not obtain a signature of a CIA witness.

Patel, however, said Levine and Tamanaha did not technically violate any of the judge's orders. That left one charge against Tamanaha which prosecutor Ted Greenberg dismissed.

WITHIN A half-hour of the



Michael Levine
Contempt charges dropped

hearing, however, an FBI agent and a court classified information security officer were at the public defender's office questioning Tamanaha about his handling of classified documents during and leading up to the contempt hearing.

Greenberg could not be reach-

ed for comment about the new probe. Assistant U.S. Attorney John Peyton, who headed the Rewald prosecution team, said he knew nothing about it.

Levine said he was "amazed" that the government would continue investigating his office. Tamanaha called the investigation "harassment."

After being cleared of contempt charges earlier in the day, Levine said, he now understands "what it's like to be accused of a crime of which you are innocent."

He said he will continue to aggressively defend his clients and said defense work "is not for the timid or the weak."

But Levine apologized to Fong "for any actions I may have taken during the course of the trial that he deemed contemptuous."

"These were mistakes and not done willfully to violate his order," Levine said. "Rather they were the product of overzealousness, exhaustion and paranoia."

The courtroom was almost filled to capacity yesterday, mostly with defense attorneys, showing their support to the two public defenders.